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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002035

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA

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SUBJECT: JORDAN MEDIA PLAYS UP GOJ DEMARCHE AGAINST THE WAR

REF: A. (A) AMMAN 2029

[1](#)B. (B) AMMAN 1954

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM FOR REASONS 1.5 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: ROUNDING OUT THE GOVERNMENT'S THREE-DAY EFFORT TO ALIGN ITS PUBLIC STANCE MORE CLOSELY WITH THE FEELINGS OF AN ANGRY NATION, JORDAN'S STATE-OWNED AND INFLUENCED MEDIA APRIL 4 PLAYED UP THE PM'S CONVOKING OF THE AMBASSADOR AS EVIDENCE THAT THE GOJ IS TAKING TANGIBLE AND MEANINGFUL STEPS TO TRANSLATE INTO ACTION THE PEOPLE'S OPPOSITION TO THE WAR. DICTATING A COMMON SCRIPT, OFFICIAL EDITORIALS IN JORDAN'S TOP TWO CIRCULATION ARABIC DAILIES LINKED THE KING'S APRIL 2 DENUNCIATIONS OF THE WAR IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED PETRA NEWS AGENCY AND THE PM'S MESSAGE TO THE AMBASSADOR AS EXPRESSION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S OPPOSITION TO THE WAR AND CONCERN OVER THE WELFARE OF IRAQI CIVILIANS. THESE EDITORIALS ALSO INCLUDE HARSH CRITICISM FOR "THOSE WHO WOULD CREATE WORTHLESS NOISE" ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE WAR, A DIRECT REFERENCE TO THE PUBLIC CHALLENGE TO THE KING IN A LETTER SIGNED BY 99 NOTABLE JORDANIANS PUBLISHED MARCH 31 IN THE JORDANIAN PRESS. FORTUITOUSLY, LOCAL REPORTING ON THE EVENT ALSO HIGHLIGHTED AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS TO THE PRESS EXPRESSING A COMMON CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF IRAQI CIVILIANS AND A COMMITMENT TO MAINTAIN THAT CONCERN EVEN AS WE PURSUE THE OBJECTIVE OF REMOVING THE BAATHIST REGIME. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) JORDAN'S ARABIC DAILIES ON APRIL 4 LED WITH REPORTING ON YESTERDAY'S CONVOKING OF THE AMBASSADOR BY THE PRIME MINISTER (REF A). IN TEXT PREPARED BY THE GOVERNMENT NEWS AGENCY, PAPERS REPORTED THAT THE PM SUMMONED THE AMBASSADOR AND "EXPRESSED TO HIM THE DENUNCIATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF JORDAN OF THE ESCALATING DESTRUCTION AND KILLING RESULTING FROM THE INVASION OF IRAQ" AND THAT THE PM "HELD THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN IRAQ." THESE STORIES ALSO CARRIED REMARKS OF THE AMBASSADOR, DELIVERED TO THE PRESS OUTSIDE THE PRIME MINISTRY FOLLOWING THE MEETING, EXPRESSING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S SHARED CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF CIVILIANS IN IRAQ AND ADDING THAT THE COALITION WAS TAKING ALL POSSIBLE MEASURES TO MINIMIZE THE EFFECTS OF THE FIGHTING ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION AND WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO EVEN AS WE PURSUED THE OBJECTIVE OF REMOVING THE BAATHIST REGIME FROM POWER. THE AMBASSADOR IS ALSO QUOTED, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE STATE OF U.S.-JORDANIAN RELATIONS, AS SAYING THAT U.S.-JORDANIAN RELATIONS REMAIN EXTREMELY CLOSE ON A VARIETY OF LEVELS, AND THAT WHILE DISAGREEMENTS MAY OCCUR, THE TWO NATIONS SHARE A COMMON CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE AND WILL WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT THEIR HUMANITARIAN NEEDS ARE MET.

[1](#)3. (U) EDITORIALS IN JORDAN'S TWO LEADING ARABIC DAILIES (AL RA'I AND AL DUSTOOR, GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AND INFLUENCED, RESPECTIVELY) FOCUSED ON THE MEETING AS EVIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS IMPLEMENTING THE VIEWS OF THE KING IN OPPOSITION TO THE WAR AS EXPRESSED A DAY EARLIER IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE STATE-RUN NEWS AGENCY, PETRA. UNDER THE TITLE, "JORDAN BETWEEN STANCE AND ACTION", AL DUSTOOR'S APRIL 4 EDITORIAL READS: "TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER THE CLEAR DENUNCIATION OF THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH INVASION OF IRAQ, AS EXPRESSED BY HM ABDULLAH THE SECOND, COMES THE SUMMONING BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, A PRACTICAL STEP THAT TRANSLATES THE NATIONALIST, PAN-ARAB AND HUMANITARIAN POSITION OF JORDAN TOWARD BROTHERLY IRAQ, (AND THIS) DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND THE SENSITIVITY OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE COUNTRY THAT HAS SET DANGEROUS TERMS FOR ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHER STATES BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE 'YOU ARE EITHER WITH US OR AGAINST US.'" AND LATER, "THE KING'S REMARKS...HAVE SHOWN THE COURAGE OF A LEADER SPEAKING THE TRUTH...SUMMONING THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO STRONGLY PROTEST THE KILLING OF IRAQI CIVILIANS...IS, IN REALITY, THE FIRST POLITICAL MEASURE THAT AN ARAB COUNTRY DARES TO ADOPT, AND MAY EVEN BE THE FIRST GENUINE STAND ADOPTED BY A COUNTRY AT THE LEVEL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THIS POSITION IS NOT MERE RHETORIC AIMED AT AVOIDING ACTUAL DUTIES." GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AL-RA'I ECHOED THIS LINE IN ITS EDITORIAL, AND ADDED A FEW BARBS FOR THOSE WHO SIGNED THE "LETTER OF THE 99": "THE PRIME MINISTER'S SUMMONING OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR IN AMMAN TO CONVEY TO HIM THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE'S DENUNCIATION...IS IN ITSELF A DUAL MESSAGE THAT MUST BE READ CAREFULLY BY ALL

THOSE CONCERNED. THE DENUNCIATION OF THE KILLING OF CIVILIANS IS MADE DIRECTLY TO THE AMBASSADOR WHOSE COUNTRY IS INVOLVED IN THE WAR AND WHOSE DUTY IT IS TO PROTECT INNOCENT CIVILIANS IN LINE WITH GENEVA CONVENTIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS A MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO ARE FILLING THE AIR WITH NOISE AND MEDIA STATEMENTS THAT HAVE NO VALUE OR WORTH ON THE GROUND."

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COMMENT  
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14. (C) THE GOVERNMENT PLAYED OUT THIS THREE-ACT PERFORMANCE IN ORDER TO ALIGN MORE CLOSELY ITS PUBLIC STANCE WITH THE ANGER AND DISSATISFACTION OF THE PEOPLE, AND AS A RESPONSE TO THE LETTER CHALLENGING ITS POSITIONS RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC EARLIER IN THE WEEK (REF B). WHETHER ALL THIS WILL DO THE TRICK REMAINS TO BE SEEN. MIXED IN WITH THIS ANGER AND DISSATISFACTION IS A DEEP SKEPTICISM AMONG JORDANIANS ABOUT GOVERNMENT DECLARATIONS, PARTICULARLY AS MORE AND MORE JORDANIANS ARE CONVINCED THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT HAS ASSISTED THE U.S. IN THE WAR. THE EXERCISE PLAYED OUT OVER THE COURSE OF THIS WEEK POINTS TO A FUTURE OF CONSIDERABLE CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT WHEN THE WAR CONCLUDES AND THE PEOPLE TAKE STOCK OF THEIR GOVERNMENT'S TRUE ROLE IN IT.

GNEHM